



Piloting Country Evaluations in CGIAR: Concept Note

March 2026

Rationale

Following the System Council (SC) approval of the 2026-27 [Workplan and Budget](#) for the Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service (IAES), the Evaluation Function is proceeding with the implementation of a process and performance country evaluation¹ and benefiting from what was learned during IAES 2025 Country Evaluation scoping. This evaluation follows a key recommendation from the high-level [review](#) of CGIAR’s advisory bodies and is intended to align with the monitoring, evaluation, learning, impact assessment and foresight (MELIAF) Gates Foundation grant to CGIAR, namely ‘Country Activator’.² The evaluation also builds on findings and five formal recommendations from the [Science Group Evaluations](#) (2024) for CGIAR to enhance coordination and leadership at country level, including better integration of thematic and geographic priorities. These recommendations echo an earlier recommendation from the [2021 Synthesis of Learning from a Decade of CGIAR Research Programs](#) to conduct regional and country level assessments of CGIAR’s ability to meet stakeholder demand. Ultimately, the IAES country evaluation supports objectives of the [2030 Research and Innovation Strategy](#) and the [2024 Engagement Framework](#).

Furthermore, as CGIAR continues its transition toward a stronger integrated partnership model, country level evaluations will help CGIAR understand how Agricultural Research for Development (AR4D) efforts respond to contextualized, complex, and evolving challenges in the sector of food and agriculture transformation. They are also instrumental in highlighting whether CGIAR’s country level *de facto* portfolio is relevant, coherent, efficient, and effective in supporting national goals for food and nutrition security, resilience, and sustainable development. Guided by the CGIAR Evaluation [Framework](#) and [Policy](#), this pilot evaluation aims to provide proof of concept for independent process and performance country evaluations and complements [country studies](#)

conducted by the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA)³ and other impact assessments led by centers and partners.

Objectives & Scope

Piloting country evaluations will provide evidence at country level about the relevance, coherence, efficiency and effectiveness of CGIAR *de facto* Portfolio implementation through the integrated partnership model. The evaluation will cover the last three years of CGIAR’s Portfolio in the selected country, including two years in the previous 2022–24 Portfolio and one year of the 2025–30 Portfolio. This work aims to support SC Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (SIMEC), the CGIAR Integrated Partnership Board (future CGIAR Board), relevant management, centers’ management and governance bodies, and key partners with context-specific evaluative learning.

Table 1. Evaluation Questions

Criteria	Key Question
Relevance	1. To what extent is CGIAR's <i>de facto</i> country level portfolio in Kenya aligned with national priorities?
Efficiency & Coherence	2. To what extent do CGIAR centers and Programs operating in Kenya implement processes and mechanisms to coordinate their efforts, strengthen coherence, avoid redundancy and support the collective delivery of country-level outcomes?
Effectiveness	3. To what extent do CGIAR Programs engage demand and scaling partners in the co-design, implementation and delivery of innovations, in ways that position these partners to assume a leading role in shaping scaling pathways in Kenya?

In parallel, the Evaluation Function leadership will engage with the MELIAF Kenya Activator and relevant

¹ Under Objective 1, the Evaluation Function will complete one country evaluation, aligned with the MELIAF grant country Accelerator and the pilot approach devised during country evaluation scoping in 2025.

² The Advisory Bodies’ Workplan, as presented by the IAES Secretariat, should be annually updated to align with

progress being made by the overall MELIAF Framework Program (being led by System Office/Portfolio and Performance Unit in coordination with IAES and centers’ Monitoring & Evaluation Community of Practice).

³ SPIA’s country studies document the adoption and diffusion of agricultural innovations linked to CGIAR research.

stakeholders to assess the opportunities and challenges of systematically integrating findings and recommendations from independent country evaluations into the MELIAF system, with a view to replicating this integration in other countries.

Key questions the evaluation aims to answer are listed in table 1. These evaluation questions are organized around three distinct but complementary dimensions of analysis: the strategic alignment of CGIAR's de facto country level portfolio with national priorities (**Relevance**), the internal coordination processes among CGIAR centers and Programs (**Coherence and Efficiency**), and the external engagement with demand and scaling partners in the co-design and delivery of innovations (**Effectiveness and Legitimacy**).

Evaluations Approach

The evaluation will follow a **mixed method design**, with triangulation of evidence from qualitative methods (case study/deep dive, desk and portfolio reviews) and quantitative methods (bibliometric analysis). Secondary data, including impact research and literature review, will also be used. The main outputs will include a country evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR), covering results of an extensive desk review and mapping of linkages with other MELIAF efforts, a case study/deep dive report and a country evaluation report (containing up to ten recommendations). The Evaluation Function will explore opportunities to contribute and learn from the MELIAF project and impact research aiming to findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable (FAIR) data flows. The selected country for the pilot should meet the following core criteria:

1. Presence of at least four CGIAR centers operating in the country (with at least one center holding a host agreement). This will allow the evaluators to assess internal (within CGIAR centers) and external (CGIAR system with partners) collaboration.
2. Opportunity to contribute to building FAIR data flows as part of the CGIAR MELIAF project and impact research.
3. Country where there is good coverage by the Areas of Work of the 13 Programs and Accelerators, as part of the [2025-30 Portfolio](#).

On this basis, the IAES Evaluation Function selected **Kenya** as a pilot country. Regarding the second criterion, the Kenya Activator⁴ provides an excellent opportunity to pilot the country evaluation. A 2025 scoping exercise that IAES performed in Uganda

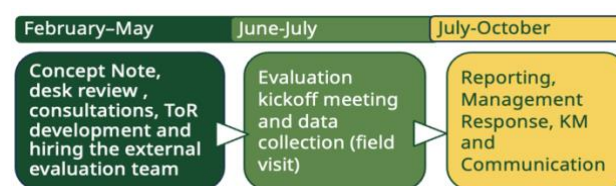
⁴ The Kenya Activator was discussed as a country-level pilot for MELIAF integration, focused on developing a joint theory of change, aligning indicators, synthesizing OIEs, and hybrid

helped to assess relevance and evaluability for a country level evaluation.

Timeline & Execution

The Evaluation Function will implement the Kenya country evaluation with the support of an independent evaluation team (team lead, subject matter expert and evaluation analyst) identified from the IAES roster, will outsource the bibliometric analysis to an external firm, and will seek advice through an ad hoc consultative group.

Figure 1. Evaluation Timeline (2026)



Institutional Entry Points & Pathways to Use

Under CGIAR's structure, the head of the CGIAR Liaison Office for Africa, will represent the evaluand and serve as the main focal point for management engagement and response. Evaluation findings and recommendations will be relevant to CGIAR centers, programs, and accelerators operating in Kenya, and will inform their planning and coordination.

The evaluation will also support several ongoing and upcoming strategic processes and theories of change, including:

1. the CGIAR Institutional Strategy (under discussion and planned for development in 2026 by CGIAR Management).
2. the Africa Strategy (draft in circulation).
3. theories of change for programs and accelerators in Kenya, including the Kenya Activator.

Budget

In line with the 2026-27 Evaluation Function budget, USD 100,000 was allocated for the Kenya country evaluation, excluding staff time. This represents a revised allocation to accommodate the expanded methodological scope following SIMEC feedback.



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work-in-progress seminars on OIEs in their design phase to facilitate coordination.